



September 22, 2016

His Majesty the King of Swaziland,
 Head of State and Chief of Armed forces, MSWATI III
 Royal Palace
 MBABANE, SWAZILAND

Subject: Urgent Appeal to Withdraw Rhino Trade Proposal

Your Majesty,

We are writing to you on this World Rhino Day to urgently appeal to you to withdraw a proposal by Swaziland to legalize the international trade in rhinoceros horn.

As you may know the seventeenth meeting of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) will occur in Johannesburg, South Africa, from September 24th to October 5th, 2016. Swaziland has proposed that CITES Parties approve international trade in horns from Swaziland's southern white rhinos; CITES currently prohibits international trade in rhino horn. The horns proposed to be traded are those from poached Swaziland rhinos, those from Swaziland rhinos that died of natural causes, and those that will be removed from living rhinos using non-lethal techniques.

This controversial proposal stands little chance of gaining the support of two-thirds of the 183 CITES Parties. The Parties have recognized that demand for rhino horn in Asia is driving rhinos to extinction. Rhino poaching has dramatically increased over the past ten years and in 2015, 1,342 African rhinos were poached for their horns. Only about 25,600 rhinos of five species remain in the wild. At this poaching rate, rhinos may soon become extinct.

At the urging of CITES Parties, in the past few years, countries around the world have increased efforts and spent millions of dollars to protect rhinos from poaching and to convince consumers in Asia to stop buying and using rhino horn. In fact, domestic trade in rhino horn is banned in China and Viet Nam.

Swaziland's proposal threatens to undermine this important global effort and further threatens the continued existence of rhinos. As has been clearly demonstrated by trade in African elephant ivory, legal ivory markets provide an opportunity for laundering illegally acquired ivory, and encourage consumers to continue buying ivory regardless of whether the origin is legal or illegal. As a consequence, African elephants have undergone a catastrophic decline by one-third from 2007-2014. The same will happen to rhinos if the legal international horn trade is approved: the legal trade in rhino horn from Swaziland will become a conduit for illegal trade in horn from rhinos poached in Swaziland and in other African countries.

We urgently appeal to Your Majesty to instruct Swaziland's delegates to the CITES meeting to withdraw this dangerous proposal.

Thank you for considering this appeal.

Sincerely,



Audrey Delsink
Executive Director
Humane Society Africa
adelsink@hsi.org

On behalf of the following organizations:

Annamiticus (USA)
Animal Conservation and Welfare Foundation (Poland)
Animal Defenders International (UK)
Animal Welfare Institute (USA)
Animals Asia Foundation (Hong Kong)
Ban Animal Trading (South Africa)
Big Cat Rescue (USA)
Born Free Foundation (UK)
CATCA Environmental and Wildlife Society (Canada)
Center for Biological Diversity (USA)
The David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation & TigerTime (UK)
Environmental Investigation Agency (UK and USA)
Global March for Elephants & Rhinos
The Humane Society of Canada (Canada)
The Humane Society of the United States (USA)
Humane Society International
International Fund for Animal Welfare
Nkombe Rhino (South Africa)
One More Generation (USA)
Outraged South African Citizens Against Poaching (South Africa)
Performing Animal Welfare Society (USA)
Pro Wildlife (Germany)
Sea Shepherd Legal (USA)
Shark Research Institute (USA)
Youth 4 African Wildlife (South Africa)
Vulcan (USA)
Wildlife Impact (USA)
Wildlife Protection Society of India (India)